



4 October 2006

Columbus Day 2006 Safety Message

1. In 1937, October 12th was designated as Columbus Day. Since 1971, the federal holiday has been observed on the second Monday in October. This year, Columbus Day falls on 9 October with 6-9 October being designated as a USFK training holiday. This gives USFK Service Members, DoD Civilians, Contractors and Families an opportunity to enjoy a well-deserved four-day weekend. Concurrently, our ROK teammates will celebrate the ROK holiday [Chu'sok](#) on 6 October and take their holiday from 5-7 October.
2. Many members of the USFK team will take advantage of this long weekend by spending time with family and friends at home, visiting relatives in-country or embarking on trips off-peninsula. Whatever your plans, I ask that you keep safety at the forefront of your actions. I expect first-line leaders to "turn on rather than turn off" over this four-day holiday. Our "*Under the Oak Tree Counseling*" approach as laid out in my [Command Policy Letter #2](#) is the best way to impact on Service Member behavior. This should include establishing a leader to lead informal contract regarding alcohol use, indiscipline, sexual assault prevention, and the use of the buddy system. The following areas require everyone's attention and are vital to your safety, that of your family and the safety of others.
 - **Traffic Accidents.** Historically, more than half of the Republic of Korea's population travels to be with family during the Chu'sok holiday period—over an already overloaded highway system. Be aware of changing [road conditions](#) in and around your installations. To reduce the potential for U.S. involvement in accidents over the Chu'sok holiday, various installation commanders are limiting off-post government vehicle use during this period. If you must drive, be alert to the possibility of intoxicated drivers on the roads...drive defensively.
 - **Limited Visibility.** As days become shorter, increased risks are associated with limited visibility. Dimly lit, narrow, and winding secondary roads make it hard for drivers to see and react to critical situations, so be mindful of road hazards, potholes, bicyclists and pedestrians. While out cycling or riding a motorcycle, wear the proper protective clothing and reflective gear.
 - **Alcohol Use.** The consumption of alcohol often increases on long weekends as friends and family enjoy cook-outs, go out to dinner together or visit on and off-post clubs. All too often abuse of alcohol is a contributing factor in sexual assaults, physical altercations, acts of indiscipline, and automobile / motorcycle crashes. Do not allow alcohol to affect your judgment or behavior and use the buddy system.
3. Our goal is no accidents, no sexual assaults, no serious injuries, and no loss of life over this holiday period. Don't let anyone go anywhere unless you have ensured that "*Under the Oak Tree Counseling*" has taken place. We can achieve this goal if every member of the USFK Team makes a commitment to safety. I am convinced that we can mitigate the risks and save lives by applying the risk management process proactively. Everyone must practice being a good neighbor and take personal responsibility for their safety.

B. B. BELL
General, US Army
Commander

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